

every time i tell my story; i begin with you by ceruleanstorm

Series: [should i stay or should i go](#); [4]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Eleven's POV, F/M, TW: Mentions of Child Abuse, Tumblr Prompt, better get some tissues, just let el have her eggos and go to the snowball with mike please she's been through enough

Language: English

Characters: Dr. Brenner, Dustin Henderson, Eleven, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler

Relationships: Eleven/Mike Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2016-09-08

Updated: 2016-09-08

Packaged: 2022-03-31 22:55:17

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,057

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

prompt: things you meant to say but never got the chance

pairing: mileven

There's so many things she wants to say to the boy who pulled her out of the rain and gave her a name. If only she had more time.

every time i tell my story; i begin with you

Author's Note:

My brain: you know you can write stuff other than Angst!El, right?

Me: okay, okay but hear me out- Angst!El right before she beats the Demogorgon's ass and sacrifices herself.

My brain: Go on....

(slight trigger warning for child abuse here. pretty self explanatory, but there is a little author's note about it at the bottom)

54) things you meant to say but never got the chance

She learns very early on that is better not to speak. Any objections, any wonders, any questions- and Papa hated questions- it was better, safer to be silent, to let the words that could set her soul free dance on her tongue, because it meant her next meal, maybe... maybe they would give her something sweet or salty too, as reward for how good she today- she did good today, right?- and then maybe Papa would eat with her. When she did extra good Papa would eat with her. And she didn't have to go... in there, in the dark where time stood still and her foreign voice echoed in cries around her.

So she never asks. *Why are you hurting me? Why are you letting these men hurt me, Papa? I thought I did good! You told me I did good...* She only screams for Papa to save her, for a second chance to fix it, to do good, to avoid the dark places the lock her in.

But good is never enough, she learns in the dark as the tear roll down her face. And as she dares to wonder what freedom taste like, they put her back in the Bathtub with a simple command. Make contact with this *thing*- this monster.

"Don't be afraid, it can hurt you" Papa tells her, and Eleven cradles the little plant he has brought her today. It's so *small* and green and fragile, she thinks to herself. She likes the green, she decides then,

and thinks of telling Papa that she likes green so maybe he will bring her more green things. *No*. She stops herself. *Not safe*.

Papa's voice and his words fades and she knows he was wrong when it turns around- it has no eyes but she *knows* it sees her- and fear and panic and paralysis take control of every bone in her body and she can't breathe- only thinking one thought over and over and over- *Get me out of here! Help me! Get me out!*

There are rough hands on her shoulders and the sensation of warm water has stopped. They've pulled her out of the Bath and as her vision clears, lights blind her and men's voices stun her, but she's running before they can catch her. No door or guard could have held her back.

As she pulls her tired self from the dark pipeline, she can't even bring herself to say the words, and decides the leave them as they are, unsaid. *I did it. I got away from those bad, horrible men. I'm free.*

The boys who find her talk a lot. A lot more than the doctors or Papa or the guards ever did. It's a full blown argument if she's ever witnessed one to get her out of what they call rain- she's never felt rain before. This water's not like the Bath, but cold and prickly against her shivering skin. Two of the boys argue against it.

"This is crazy! This is insane!" One of them screams. Eleven admires how he has no issue screaming what he feels.

The other is calmer, but reserved still. "It's not a good idea. Let's go get someone."

"Who?" the last one-the one who talks the most- shouts "Who are we going to get? C'mon, we need to get her out of the rain, let's just take her back to my place." He's handing her something then, his jacket, and talking to her calmly as they lead her through the woods and back to his "place" arguing the entire way, their voices echoing in the woods and in the rain. She's never known anything like their voices. Eleven brings the jacket closer.

She's never known anything like them.

There is more argument- more talking- in what to do with her. She isn't deaf- whatever that means- but when she's given dry clothes and speaks to the boy who gave her his jacket, his eyes widen in disbelief, before he goes and tries to convince the others she should stay.

Should she stay? All she has to do is stay. *Not safe*, she thinks. But, she bites her lip, the boy who gave her his jacket seems kind- an addicting sort of kind that doesn't ring familiar, but she decides he's good. He's safe. They're safe.

After the other two leave- they've explained to her what a friend is and the word is funny and strange in her mouth- she learns the one who talks the most- his name is Mike. She likes his name, she decides. It feels familiar, like she's known the name all along. But she doesn't like it as much she likes the name he's given her. El.

Mike stays with her the next day. It's another argument, another battle when she doesn't want him to get this woman he calls Mom. No words are said when she explains the Bad Men, he just knows somehow she's in trouble, but now that he knows will they come from him? For the other two? The thought fills El with anger she's yet to understand. But she didn't tell the the man Benny about the Bad Men chasing her, and they still found him. As long as Mike doesn't tell his mom... safe.

He shows her his house, it feels too big and too small at the same time, his dad's chair, the TV, pictures of Nancy and talks nonstop as he does it.

"Pretty..." A word she knows. A word she wishes for.

"Yeah, I guess." Mike says and they go back to exploring and he goes back to talking. She has questions, but he seems to have the answers before she can gather the courage to ask them. With a heart that now new hope again, El appreciates that more than Mike will ever know. The word promise is added to her vocabulary- something you can't break- like her? Like hope? Something like that, but stronger. Promise, she thinks later, and thinks of him.

The next day is different and painfully quiet without Mike's voice, or the voices of Dustin and Lucas (she likes their names too, but she decides she likes Mike's more). She slipped up- she lost control and locked the door, but they react with different things like awe and disbelief instead of *good* or *again*. And it's better she thinks. They look for Will, Mike trusts her- not in the way she trusts him- but to find their friend Will. She learns the word mouth breather... but the idea of someone hurting Mike fuels that anger again.

But she can't explain it when she brings them to Will. She doesn't know how, and this time Mike doesn't understand. All he understands is that they've pulled Will's body -*how*, she wonders, *he's still there, I can still feel him!*-out of the water and she knows when she looks at his face she's broken something between them- trust, a promise, something- and the tears are hot in her eyes as he yells. Dustin and Lucas lead her back to the Wheeler's house in silence that breaks her, the words I'm sorry linger on her lips but she sees Mike, looks at his face, and can't say them.

She can only show him. So uses every ounce of herself, channels everything she has into the radio, and finds him, hears him. And he does too.

It's a blur from there. El's trying to soak it all in as it happens, she wants her story to begin here, with them, with Mike and blonde wigs and the way he looks at her when he says "Pretty," not with white walls or Papa's disappointed glare or little green plants. Then it's a school assembly and *those* mouth breathers- the ones who are constantly hurting Mike and Dustin and Lucas and Will. *No more*, she thinks as the other kids laugh and Mike looks at her in disbelief-awe. Then the radio. Then Will's voice. Then a funeral.... she doesn't go. Because she's a secret, Mike explains, making her stomach sick with that word. He promises to be back. It's enough.

She can't keep them from going to the gate, but she can keep them from finding it. They don't understand, they can't understand, El realizes when a fight explodes right before her eyes- and she is the cause. Mike trusts her up until the last moment, and she's taken his trust and broken it all over again. But she needed to protect him. All of them.

“It’s not safe.” she says even though her voice shakes.

Lucas isn’t done, and El sees something Mike that’s different than trust when the fight breaks, and something new in her. Her mouth forms the words “Stop it.” *Stop it. Stop it. STOP STOP STOP STOP TOUCHING HIM.* And before she knows what’s happening- she can barely see she’s so upset- El throws Lucas in the air, as far away from Mike as she can before she realizes what she has done. Mike loses it, he holds nothing back and leaves nothing unsaid. There is something wrong with her. Lucas is right.

She is the monster.

So she runs. As far as her feet can carry her and as fast as she can go away from Mike, away from Dustin, away from their voices where she could hurt them. The woods are lonely, and her grumbling stomach echoes, an empty sound in the trees. Loneliness is something she knows, it knows her by the name and takes her by the throat, but she’s never known it like this. When she wakes, she’s no longer pretty. El- no Eleven- never was.

No, Eleven is something else. And Troy’s about to learn this because he has crossed a line he’s going to regret. A broken arm? That was a demonstration. A taste. Dustin makes this clear too, but the ground is too cool and she’s too tired to get back up until Mike is there.

“You saved me!” he tells her, enveloping her and she thinks of a thousand words to say and can’t say any of them.

None of them would be ever enough.

He takes her home, quick to forgiveness and kindness. Mike cleans her face with care and kindness, even careful of the cut on her lip. *Still Pretty? Yeah. Really, pretty.* Words fill her mouth, she wants to say something- he’s glad she’s home and she’s glad too- but if she could’ve said something more she won’t now, there’s something that’s reminiscent of gravity pulling them toward each other-

Dustin. Dustin saying Lucas is in trouble, the Bad Men, El knows Mike’s bike could never carry them fast enough as the vans round the corner and it’s almost easy. Child’s play. Her child’s play. The van

flips, she licks her lips and taste blood but it's worth. *How dare you try and take this away. How dare you try and hurt them. I won't let you. I won't let you hurt them.*

Lucas and Mike and her- they all mend their broken bones and wash away the bad blood, and her story starts to blur faster- the helicopters, the Junkyard, the man named Hopper, Joyce, Jonathan, Nancy... the Bath.

They're all gone now. Mike's just realized Nancy and Jonathan have gone. This she can say. This she knows.

"Demogorgon."

El tries not to think about how the boys have given both her and Demogorgon nicknames. It just hurts too much.

The Bath has left her sick and dizzy, and Mike stays close, his fingers lightly brushing hers, slightly electric as they walk from the gym to the cafeteria. Lucas and Dustin have gone to raid the kitchen for whatever chocolate pudding is. Mike explains, like he always does because he's patient, he understands but if she's being honest, pudding sounds gross. Not like Eggos. She likes the promise of eggos.

"See I was thinking..." Mike starts talking and she's all ears. There is so much safety in his voice. He tells her all about his plan. She's going to stay with him. Her own bed sounds nice. Sleep right now sounds better than anything. El wants to tell him he doesn't have to take the basement, she likes it down there and if he's down there all the time, then it works out, doesn't it? But she also doesn't want to interrupt him, or the sound of his voice. And Nancy her new sister... did that mean.

It didn't. Not to him, at least. And when she asks why, he can't explain it.

Since when can't Mike explain something? *Oh*, El realizes. He just doesn't *want* to. But she's going to drag it out of him if she has to.

"Friends don't lie."

He's brave- or maybe impulsive- all of a sudden because of her

words, and she would know the feeling, and before she can comprehend it, register it, remember the look on his face, he's kissing her- kissing, that's the word, quick and simple but so much more than that. The words she's been dying to say are brought to the surface once more, but they are drowned by the sound of her heart beat pounding, beating, with hope and new beginnings. She takes him in, his face, his smile, the freckles she decides remind her of the new sky she's been introduced to, and memorizes the inkling of pride and happiness in his expression. Yes, the kiss, that's theirs to share, but his face- that's a memory just for her. For only her.

Ghost from her past ruin the moment. The Bad Men are here, but Mike holds her hand as the run, replacing paralyzing fear-*they could take this away, the could hurt you, all of you-* with bravery and enough anger to do to the bad men what they've always deserved. She collapses, and try as they might, as they so badly want to, Papa and the Bad Men reach her fallen form first. Hate fills her. No more talk of taking her back. No more talking of getting better. She calls for Mike, her words weak in her own ears, like a prayer.

The real monster is here. Taking her in his arms, Dustin is carrying her and they're all running, it's ugly cries and screeching never far enough behind them. Dustin lays her down, and she reaches for Mike, his hand the only thing anchoring her to her blurring and blinking. Focus on his voice. His promise.

"Promise?"

"Promise." No falter. No doubt. No pain. Only hope. He is the definition of hope, the light in the dark places the lock her in.

Lucas, the dwarf versus the giant. *He'll lose*, she tells herself, but she already knows that. This was her fight from the start. How cruel she was to make them fight it. Friend's don't lie. Friends don't let friends die.

So she stands, ready to end it. Once and for all. No more pain or hurt or danger from *either* of them. Mike calls out her name, tries to stop her, and she throws him back with one flick of her hand. He can't stop her. Not when she's doing this for him. Those dark places won't define her, she decides, but what he has taught her, what he's given

her, what they've all done for her, *that* will define her.

And this moment will too.

El turns to him in the last moment. There's so many things she wants to say. Though after thought of everything she never said, everything she meant to say.

Thank you for taking me out of the rain.

Thank you for your jacket.

Thank you for the blanket fort and for the Eggos.

Thank you for knowing about the Bad Men. For not getting your mom.

I like your voice.

I like your name.

They both sound like home to me.

Thank you for my nickname. It broke all of their chains. It freed me.

Thank you for trusting me. I wasn't worthy of it. And thank you for trusting me again and again and again.

Do you really think I'm pretty as myself or do you like me better in the wig? As her? I can't be her, Mike. Is that still okay?

Are my powers really cool?

If anyone ever tries to hurt you ever again, I'm not just breaking their arm.

If you ever try jumping off another cliff or do anything stupid like that ever again, Mike Wheeler, I'll break your arm. I wouldn't actually, but don't do it again.

Take care of Dustin for me. Listen to Lucas. Say hi to Will and give him a hug for me. Tell him he was worth it, and that he has the best mom in the world. Watch Hopper, I'm worried about him. Tell Nancy's she pretty. Tell Jonathan to ask her to the Snowball, too.

We'll go with them won't we?

Will you teach me how to dance?

You're a pretty good kisser- I think, but I think you could use some practice.

You saved me. Please know this,

Don't forget me either, Mike Wheeler. Don't forget me, okay?

Promise.

But she can't say any of that. Maybe one day she'll say them, but not today. She's out of time.

El can barely look at him. She doesn't want to remember this, the look on his face as he knows what she's doing and can't do a single thing to stop it. She wants to remember his smile, his laugh, his voice, the look in his eyes when he kissed her.

She swallows, saying only one thing. "Goodbye Mike."

Turning, she faces the monster. One last scream, it hurts so much but she keeps going, keeps fighting, like she always has.

You can't hurt me! She thinks, bravery filling every last fiber of her. Bravery he's inspired. *You can't break me. Not with him behind me. Not with my friends here with me.*

It's all she needs. It's all she's ever needed to do this.

For Dustin Henderson. Lucas Sinclair. Will Byers.

And Mike Wheeler.

Because sometimes it's safer not to speak, but so dangerous to leave things unsaid. And with him, she's left a million things unsaid.

Author's Note:

okay note about the tw: As a writer I think it would

be ignorant to ignore El's abusive childhood, but I want to write it in way so she's not just a victim, but a survivor. Cause, damn, that girl's been through hell and she's still kind. What did we ever do to deserve her?

should i stay or should i go; mixtape track 4: we had everything // broods

hmu on tumblr @ sstrangerthaneleven